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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 25 November 1991, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. SHIHABI	(Saudi Arabia)
later:	Mr. ROGERS (Vice-President)	(Belize)
later:	Mr. SHIHABI (President)	(Saudi Arabia)

- Question of Palestine [33] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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(b) Report of the Secretary-General

- Programme of work

- Organization of work

- Question of Palestine [33] (continued)

(a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

(b) Report of the Secretary-General

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 33 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/46/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/623 and Corr.1)

Mr. KHAMSY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French): For more than four decades the question of Palestine has been one of constant concern to the international community in its desire to find a just and equitable solution to all the problems of the Middle East in general and, in particular, to come to the assistance of the long-suffering and uprooted Palestinian people, with a view to having restored to that people its fundamental and inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

It will be recalled that, following the partition of Palestine in 1947 into two separate entities - one Jewish, the other Arab - the Arab State of Palestine did not emerge until the Palestine National Council, at a special session in Algiers, had the courage solemnly to proclaim it on 15 November 1988.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

That proclamation was welcomed by the Lao People's Democratic Republic and by the majority of States Members of the Organization. This was a historic event for the Palestinian people, which continues to be exposed to Israel's policy of total political annihilation. The international community demonstrated great interest in that proclamation, deeming that, together with the other Algiers declaration issued on the same occasion, it was an important step towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that in the debate in Geneva on the question of Palestine, during the forty-third session of the General Assembly, President Yasser Arafat personally extended an olive branch to Israel by recognizing implicitly the creation and existence of the Jewish State that resulted from the 1947 partition; by condemning terrorism in all its forms, including, of course, State terrorism; and by calling upon Israel to engage in talks with a view to resolving the conflict in the framework of the International Peace Conference and on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Unfortunately, this courageous proposal did not receive the long-awaited favourable response from the Tel Aviv authorities, who, on the contrary, hardened their position so much that all initiatives were blocked and the question of Palestine was again deadlocked.

Since then, three years have passed - three years that have shaken the world with the profound and rapid changes with which everyone is familiar, including the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union, East-West détente, the end of the cold war, the end of a bipolar world characterized by ideological antagonism and confrontation and by the peaceful settlement of many regional and other conflicts.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

However, all these developments in international relations, which can be described as favourable, have not had a major impact on the internal situation in Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories. Inhuman repression has even intensified against the defenceless civilian populations. It is invariably characterized by, inter alia, hardships of all types; mass arrests; kidnappings; internal deportations; expulsions to neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan, leading in most cases to forced and very painful separations of families; confiscation of property, including homes and land; restriction of civil liberties; and indiscriminate firing on innocent crowds.

Together with all these arbitrary and inhuman practices, which are violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, the authorities of Israel have recently stepped up alarmingly their programme of establishing new settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as in the other occupied Arab territories, in spite of the repeated urgent appeals by the international community aimed at putting an end to all measures or undertakings that could jeopardize attempts to reach a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict as a whole.

Faced with this untenable, repressive situation and the arrogant defiance by the authorities of Israel, the Palestinian people in the occupied territories have no other choice but to redouble their efforts and sacrifices in the sacred struggle to recover their inalienable fundamental rights and to cast off Israel's colonialist yoke. The intifadah movement, which is in its fourth year, is a worthy embodiment of that people's courage and determination

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

and has won the admiration and support of all peace- and justice-loving peoples throughout the world.

The consequences and the ultimate lesson of the tragic Gulf War have made for a broadening of the ranks of those who support an urgent political solution to the Israel-Arab conflict, a solution that Israel could not avoid. Thus, the peace conference on the Middle East, convened at the initiative of the United States, under the joint auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union, opened on 30 October 1991 at Madrid. While the bilateral negotiations in the framework of the conference, in particular those between the Israelis and the Palestinians, will admittedly be lengthy, difficult and complex, we have good reason to hope that all the parties to the conflict will be able to overcome the obstacles and achieve a final solution, just and honourable for everyone.

My delegation cannot but welcome the convening of this conference, and pays a tribute to the United States for its persistent efforts in making possible the launching of the peace process. However, we believe that any just and lasting solution requires that a number of guiding principles be taken into account - namely, the reaffirmation of the legitimate inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to exist as an independent sovereign State in Palestine; the cessation of the establishment of settlements and the withdrawal by Israel from all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; and the right of all the States in the region to live in security within secure and internationally recognized borders.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

In the light of those guiding principles, the Lao People's Democratic Republic wishes to join the international community's efforts to provide the essential assistance and support for the Palestinian people's cause.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

In this context, we wish in particular to congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs for their tireless activities over the past years in organizing the world over conferences, seminars and symposia aimed at mobilizing international public opinion as effectively as possible in favour of the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people. We also pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations who has spared no effort in seeking the conditions that would allow the convening of the international conference in accordance with the recommendations contained in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. It is our firm hope that at last the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people will be crowned with success.

Mr. BASHARMAL (Afghanistan): It is a matter of pleasure that this august assembly is once again considering the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The item has been under consideration almost since the establishment of the Organization, and yet the question has remained unsolved. The sufferings of the Palestinian people continue and the region has remained a hotbed of tension and a threat to international peace and security.

The struggle of the Palestinian people and the heroic intifadah, against all odds, have demonstrated all over the world that the Palestinian people are ready to continue the struggle to gain their legitimate rights.

The international community, and the United Nations system, as representative of the will of that community, have every obligation to adopt

(Mr. Basharmal, Afghanistan)

all the necessary measures to accelerate the initiated peace process and bring to an end the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

We are living in a world which is going through a process of fundamental changes. Events are progressing at an unprecedented pace. On the one hand, we witness positive developments which fill our hearts with the hope of a new era of peace and stability where human rights are guaranteed and justice is the basis of relations among human beings. On the other hand, we witness other developments which give rise to our concern for the future generation and even for us.

The world-wide desire to bring the cold war to an end and the positive and democratic changes all over the world have been, for example, the source of hope. But the tense situation in the Middle East and the continued military conflict in Afghanistan have been a source of concern. In the first case, this is largely because of the intransigence of the Government and extremist political circles of Israel, marked by its persistent denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the continued occupation of the territories of other Arab countries. In the second case, this is because of foreign interference, particularly armed interference and intervention that encourage the irrational intransigence of the Afghan extremist opposition, marked by persistent refusals to accept a peaceful solution of the Afghan problem.

The Republic of Afghanistan, sharing the sufferings of the people of Palestine, from the very beginning, has fully supported the legitimate struggle of the people of Palestine for the liberation and independence of their country from the occupying Power, including the establishment of a Palestinian State on their soil. To that end, the Republic of Afghanistan

(Mr. Basharmal, Afghanistan)

attaches great importance to the efforts made by the United Nations system, this lofty representative of the will of the international community.

During the past decade, the Republic of Afghanistan has been persistently considering the convening of an international conference on the situation in the Middle East, of which the question of Palestine constitutes the core, with the participation, on an equal footing, of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, as a necessary practical step for a just and peaceful solution of the question of Palestine and other matters of dispute in the region.

We welcome the recent international peace talks held in Madrid under the co-chairmanship of the United States and the Soviet Union with the participation of the representative of the Secretary-General. The talks mark the start of a difficult road towards the goal of self-determination by the Palestinians and the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations.

It is worth mentioning that, for the achievement of a comprehensive peace based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to ensure security and recognition for all States in the region, we must travel a long path and build up considerable trust and understanding. Despite the difficulties which the Madrid talks faced, no one can deny that a turning-point in the solution of the Middle East problem has almost been reached.

The negotiations begun at Madrid will undoubtedly take time to bear fruit. But there is no question that the process for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East in general, and between Israel and Palestinians in particular, has been facilitated to some extent as a result of the Madrid face-to-face talks. No party will ever again be able to argue that there is no one on the

(Mr. Basharmal, Afghanistan)

other side with whom to negotiate. We hope that all obstacles in the path of a peaceful settlement and the establishment of a lasting peace in the Middle East will be removed as soon as possible. We are sure that, when the Mid-East adversaries digest the implications of what has happened so far, they will be able to reach a just compromise.

The delegation of the Republic of Afghanistan is convinced that, pending the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the Assembly and the Security Council should take all necessary measures to stop the establishment of new settlements and to protect the lives and rights of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly meets today to debate the item on Palestine in the context of the ongoing international efforts to define the parameters of a new international order that would give hope to all those suffering peoples which continue to be deprived of their fundamental rights and reassure such peoples that they have a real opportunity to enjoy freedom, political independence and progress, like all other peoples.

Today, as we all look forward to a future full of hope and outstanding achievements, we should not ignore the lessons of the past. There is a sort of continuity to history that makes the past contribute to the moulding of the present and shape the trends of the future.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

It is on this basis that I should like to refer to the fact that this item which we are now considering and which has warranted our full attention over many years, was included in the agenda of the General Assembly for the first time in April 1947, at the request of the United Kingdom, which at that time was the mandatory power over Palestine, in the basis of the responsibilities entrusted to it by the League of Nations. The Covenant of the League of Nations explicitly stipulated the right of Palestine to exist as an independent and recognized nation, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by the mandatory power, and I quote:

(spoke in English)

"Certain communities, formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations - and I underline these words, Mr. President, as independent nations - can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory (Power) until such time as they are able to stand alone." (Covenant of the League of Nations, Art. 22, para. 4)

(continued in Arabic)

There can be no doubt that these undisputed historical and legal facts contributed to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (III), on the partition of Palestine, which established the principle of creating two States in Palestine and affirmed the right of each State to independence.

Today, notwithstanding the astounding changes the world has witnessed in the course of this, a century of momentous events which have left their imprint on the march of humanity, especially with regard to the lofty principles which have come to form an integral part of the fabric of civilized

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

society, we must all face up to the responsibility of devising some honest and sincere answer to this bewildering question: how is it that the international community has continued to acquiesce in the denial of the fundamental rights of an entire people, the Palestinian people?

Over the past few years, the international community has witnessed a fundamental transformation in the approach of the Palestinian people and Palestinian leadership in addressing their cause. This is a transformation that has been welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the States of the world as a positive step that would lead to a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East problem in general and of the question of Palestine in particular.

Now that the first stage of the Madrid Peace Conference has taken place with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestinians, the Palestinian resolve to accept the challenge of peace has been reaffirmed once again. This was confirmed by the statement of Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi at the General Assembly on 21 November 1991 when he said:

> "Our participation in this peace process was a difficult choice for the Palestinian people, which has been languishing under the yoke of Israeli occupation for many years." (A/46/PV.51, p. 22)

Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi went on to say:

> "Our Palestinian National Council, at its special session of 24 September 1991, decided to accept participation in this new peace process on the basis of very clear foundations that adhere to international legality and respond to the resolutions of the United Nations and the desire and movement of the international community towards finding peaceful solutions to international problems and regional

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

disputes, especially after the outstanding historic developments which mankind has been witnessing following the end of the cold war".

(A/46/PV.51, pp. 22-23/25)

I cannot fail on this occasion to express once again to the Palestinian people Egypt's great appreciation of this courageous step it has taken through its representatives and of the outstanding manner in which those representatives have put the Palestinian case and won the appreciation and admiration of the world. Thus the Palestinian people and its representatives have fully shouldered the responsibility of seizing this unique opportunity to bring peace to Palestine and put an end to more than four decades of suffering, frustration and despair.

We have always maintained that acting within the rules of international legality stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations was the only way to lay the foundations of a just settlement that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights.

The process that began in Madrid makes it incumbent upon all the parties involved in the crisis of the Middle East, particularly the government of Israel, to discharge a special responsibility, not only vis-à-vis the Palestinian people but also towards the international community as a whole, if we are to achieve the results we aspire after and thus pave the way to the resolution of the Palestinian problem, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights - including the right to self-determination - like every other people in the world.

Last Friday, we heard the statement of the Permanent Representative of Israel. I had expected his statement to be in consonance with the developments that are taking place in the world and with the spirit of peace that prevails in the Middle East. However, the statement was full of

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

historical untruths and put forward claims and arguments and that completely lack any legal or historical foundation. The statement also bypassed the Madrid Peace Conference and failed to reflect the positive spirit that was expected after the Madrid meetings. The claims and arguments in that statement are not compatible, in our view, with the prevailing spirit of peace and are not consonant with the desire of the international community to achieve a just peaceful settlement.

Recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is the first guarantee of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. That is why a positive political will, and not pressure, violence or the imposition of any fait accompli, is what is needed from all parties if this objective is to be achieved.

So far, the question of Palestine has defied all attempts at solving it or even containing it by force. On the contrary, such attempts have only complicated the situation further and obstructed every effort that aimed at reaching a just settlement through dialogue. That is why Egypt would like to reiterate its categorical opposition to the Israeli policy of settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories including Al-Quds, because this policy runs counter to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. There is international unanimity on the illegal nature of such practices. Undoubtedly, persistence in those practices will prove to be a very real obstacle that will obstruct any progress towards peace and will not promote confidence between the parties in the Middle East. That is why we demand the immediate halting of the building of settlements.

We should not forget also that the question of Palestine, the rights of the Palestinian people, and the Middle East crisis as a whole, are very

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

closely linked with the principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force - a principle which has been reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Any attempt at non-compliance with or circumvention of this principle would turn the occupied Palestinian territories into a prize of war with which the victor may do whatever he likes in complete disregard of the rights of the Palestinian people with its age-old roots in this territory. This would fly in the face of all the principles of international legality, which are the very foundation upon which the contemporary international legal order stands.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

The quintessence of the question of the Middle East and the question of Palestine is the correlation between rights and territory. No settlement will be practicable unless this relationship is addressed with equal attention to both its components. This close relationship is reflected in the principle of land for peace, on the basis of which the Madrid Middle East conference was convened in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, especially its rights to self-determination, is indeed the key to resolving the problem of the Middle East in a manner that would guarantee the security of all States in the region, including Israel, through the mutual recognition of rights and obligations in line with the rules of international legality and contemporary international law.

The Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and elsewhere has received its representatives, upon their return from the Madrid conference, with olive branches, in expression of its desire to achieve an honourable peace and peaceful coexistence, and in reaffirmation of its determination to continue its march towards peace despite obstacles. It draws the strength and resolve to surmount those obstacles from its history, its culture and its distinctive national character, which is the fountainhead of its aspirations.

We, on our part, will extend every support to this fraternal people which has suffered for far too long, and we call upon the United Nations with all its membership, not to fail to support the just position of the Palestinian people; support for that position means the upholding of what is right and fair and enhanced credibility for the United Nations, which would be shouldering its responsibilities towards the settlement of conflicts and

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

consolidation of international peace and security on the basis of justice, to which we all aspire.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): The sacred land of Palestine, and its holy centre of Bitolmoghaddas - Jerusalem - which has a very special place in the hearts of the followers of three religions of the world, continues to suffer from aggression and occupation. The people of Palestine are subjected daily to brutal treatment and naked violations of the principles of human rights. They expect the international community to consider the occupation of their land in the same way as it has other cases of occupation, and to avoid the application of a double standard in their case.

During recent decades, many United Nations documents have condemned the illegal activities of the Zionist regime, especially the illegal changes in the social and historical character of the occupied land of Palestine. It is regrettable to note that the Israeli response to these calls has been the continuation of aggression in all its dimensions - harassment and physical ill-treatment, collective punishment and expulsion of Palestinians, looting, demolition of houses, establishment of so-called new settlements, and imposition of the rule of an occupying regime in Palestine and the Golan Heights.

In the course of recent months, the human rights situation in the occupied territories has further deteriorated. The latest report (A/46/522) of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories provides a list of Palestinians killed by the Zionists during the heroic uprising between 1 April 1991 and 22 August 1991. This document provides clear details of how 120 Palestinians were killed over about four months: some of the victims were killed during clashes with troops, while others were

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

killed by masked men. The same report contains a list of 37 houses or rooms in Palestine that were demolished or sealed between 1 April 1991 and 31 August 1991.

In the face of these brutalities, the Palestinians have decided to confront the aggression through their popular uprising. Intifadah is not only a word, it is a history: it is the history of a nation rising up with bare hands against a most brutal enemy armed with ruthlessness and sophisticated weapons. Though the history of this struggle goes back decades, the new chapter, that is, the intifadah, was born on 8 December 1987 as the natural reaction of the most oppressed people.

On the one hand, the creation of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories in contravention of all international rules and norms and the declared intention of the Zionists to establish further settlements and increase the settler population and, on the other hand, the continuation of harassment of the Palestinians aimed at forcing them to leave their homeland are clear proof of what the Special Committee's report calls

> "a deliberate will to modify the demographic composition of the occupied territories." (A/46/522, p. 6)

The latest report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People states that

> "It was estimated that, between the beginning of the intifadah and 31 July 1991, a total of 504,120 dunums of land ... had been confiscated by the Israeli authorities. Over 230,000 Israeli settlers were reported to reside in some 170 settlements, rural and urban, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including expanded East Jerusalem."
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> (A/46/35, para. 26)

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

With the proclamation of the creation of Greater Israel, a frightening scenario began unfolding, a scenario in which, from the very outset, expulsion of Palestinians and land-grabbing have been the main themes.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In this scenario, there is no place for the legitimate human rights of Palestinians. The consequences of this policy are not only disregard for the legitimate rights of Palestine but also the creation of an atmosphere of insecurity and instability in the Middle East, thus endangering international peace and security.

It is obvious from its very nature that the Zionist regime is not seeking a just solution to the Palestine problem. The position taken by its leaders before, during and after the Madrid Conference clearly showed that the aim of the policy pursued by the Zionists was only to improve their position and create disunity among the other participants. How could a conference find a well-deserved and just solution to this problem under circumstances in which the torture of innocent people in Palestine, the establishment of new settlements, and aggression against Islamic countries, especially daily attacks against Lebanon, are continuing unabated? In our view, the problem of Palestine must be tackled if justice is to be done in its fullest and broadest sense. This will not come to pass unless the rights of the nation of Palestine, including its right to self-determination, are fulfilled.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, aware of the aspirations of the Muslim people of Palestine, has since its establishment supported their legitimate struggles to restore their basic rights. The question of Palestine and the fate of Al-Quds - Jerusalem - are of utmost importance and dear to the hearts and minds of all Muslims around the globe, and if this sensitive question is to be properly addressed, their concerns must be fully taken into account. The oppressed Palestinians have been expecting the international community to help them achieve their lofty goals. We have a moral responsibility to meet their expectations.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to inform Members that the announcement of voluntary contributions to the 1992 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which was scheduled for Tuesday, 3 December 1991, in the morning, will take place instead in the afternoon of that day.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): The Secretary-General has indicated the wish to make a statement to the General Assembly under agenda item 109, "Current financial crisis of the United Nations", and agenda item 110, "Financial emergency of the United Nations", in order to introduce his report (A/46/600 and Add.1) on the financial situation of the United Nations. Inasmuch as these two items have been allocated to the Fifth Committee for consideration, it will be necessary for the General Assembly to take a decision that the report of the Secretary-General on these two items will be introduced in the plenary Assembly. It is understood that the substantive consideration of agenda items 109 and 110 remains in the Fifth Committee.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly decides that the report of the Secretary-General on the financial situation of the United Nations will be introduced in the plenary Assembly under agenda items 109 and 110?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): In the light of the decision just taken, I should like to inform the General Assembly that the Secretary-General will address the Assembly on the subject of the financial situation of the United Nations on Wednesday, 4 December, as the first order of business in the afternoon.

AGENDA ITEM 33 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE:

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/46/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/623 and Corr.1)

Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): First of all, as I am addressing the General Assembly for the first time this session, I would like to express my delegation's congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly for the current session and to express to you my personal pleasure at seeing you in this post.

I would also like to voice my delegation's great appreciation of the work done by Mrs. Diallo, Chairperson of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and also thank the members of the Committee, for the efforts they have made in support of the cause of the Palestinian people. The report submitted to the General Assembly by this Committee in document A/46/35 reflects the valuable work being done by it in its noble mission.

The question of Palestine is being discussed by the General Assembly in this current session in an international climate which we can unreservedly qualify as one in which the balance of power has been upset, the theories that have characterized international relations since the end of the Second World War have been changed, and in which many claims have been refuted and many facts been confirmed. In dealing with international and regional questions, the world is now armed with deeper understanding and greater hopes. These changes have been reflected in different parts of the world, and the Middle East is no exception. The changes that this region has seen in their interaction and their international and regional dimension have reviewed and

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

revived hopes and confirmed the necessity for serious international efforts to establish peace in a region which has suffered the scourge of war, destruction and division.

The efforts of Mr. James Baker, Secretary of State of the United States, with the support of the Soviet Union, the European Community and the rest of the world, were based on these changes. These efforts have been a real test of the true intentions of all parties. They clearly uncovered those who set obstacles on the road to peace. Israel has continued to raise obstacles, one after another, through the intransigent statements of its Prime Minister, in which he stated that Israel would never cede an inch of land and would never accept the land-for-peace principle, and also through its continuation of the settlements policy and the building of settlements on occupied land. It is also reflected in unacceptable conditions concerning Palestinian representation. For the first time in history, the occupying Power has retained for itself a veto over those who may represent the occupied people with which it is negotiating.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

Despite all this, the Madrid Peace Conference was convened. It was convened because of international insistence on the need to launch the peace process and of the flexibility of the Arab parties and their cooperation with those efforts.

My country supported the convening of the Conference and wished it all success, hoping that it would be the starting-point of the establishment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East based on the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, and the regaining by the Palestinian people of all its legitimate rights, including its right to self-determination.

History will judge the role of this Conference and the results of future meetings. However, we cannot ignore the fact that while this Conference, a turning-point in the history of this conflict, has revived many hopes, it has also generated many a disappointment as a result of the discussions that took place there.

Our initial assessment reveals that the importance of this Conference lies in bringing to light the reality of the positions of the different parties with regard to the fundamental issue, namely, that of peace. This is an issue that is very important per se and in view of the results to which it may lead with regard to the allocation of responsibilities and paving the way to the future. The first signals from Madrid have made absolutely clear to world public opinion where the Arabs stand on peace and where Israel stands.

Despite the sacrifices of the Arab parties and their flexibility in the Conference, the position of Israel continued to be intransigent as it

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

persisted in its refusal to recognize the main and objective elements of the conflict. We have seen how, in his falsification of history, Shamir has tried to deny the very existence of the Arabs, both Moslem and Christian in the territory of Palestine. This he did in order for him to be able to deny the Palestinian people the right of self-determination on its own land. The same position is reflected also in Israel's refusal to implement the resolutions it claimed to be committed to, foremost among which are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Neither during or after the Conference has Israel shown any evidence of good intentions vis-à-vis the peace process. Indeed, right after the Conference, it inaugurated new settlements in the occupied territories and, last week, there was the Knesset resolution on the non-negotiability of the Golan Heights. This was yet another slap in the face to the peace efforts.

These are but new chapters in the tome of old Israeli positions. However, this time, they take place under the eyes of the whole world and in direct defiance not only of United Nations resolutions, for which Israel has never cared anyway, but also of the peace process and the very principle of peace. In pursuing this policy, Israel wants the world to despair of the feasibility of peace and is trying to portray the Middle East as a region that is immune to the impact of international developments. It would follow from this that the world would be better off if it dealt with the region on the basis of the fait accompli imposed by the force of arms, namely, Israeli occupation and Israeli hegemony.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

Israel's goal in all this is to hold on to the land and to evade its legal, moral and international responsibilities so that it may continue to be free to act outside international legality, especially in regard to the building of its military might and the development, manufacture and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction without any international control. Zionist extremists even say that peace is the real danger that threatens Israel.

Anyway, we are happy to see the peace process in motion, thanks to the momentum generated by international unanimity and the determination to achieve peace. We look forward with hope to the forthcoming talks in Washington, D.C., next month. On this occasion, we call upon the international community not to be stopped by despair but to continue to push forward the peace process. We realize that it is a difficult and complex process, but it is indispensable if the region of the Middle East is to resume its civilizing role and thereby ensure that security and stability may prevail in the world.*

Before concluding, I should like to pay tribute to the sense of history, the political flexibility, the wisdom and ability shown by the Palestinian negotiators in their stand that reflects the position of a steadfast people under occupation which has resisted and continues to resist every form of torture and displacement and yet finds it possible to carry the olive branch. From this rostrum, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to every woman and child, to all the young and the elderly, who are still struggling in defence of the sanctity of their sacred land.

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* Mr. Rogers (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the General Assembly longer than any other international problem. The suffering and hardships of the Palestinian people date back to the very establishment of the United Nations.

For three years now, the world has been experiencing fundamental changes which have replaced tension and rivalry between the two super-Powers with understanding and cooperation. Democracy has replaced dictatorship in every shape and form, and thanks to these changes, conditions have been created that are conducive to the settlement of regional disputes through peaceful means under the auspices of the United Nations, in every part of the world, with the exception of the Middle East conflict which has continued to be marginalized and kept out of the list of United Nations and international community's concerns.

Once again the question of Palestine is being considered. However, at this session, it is being examined under new and distinctive circumstances following the launching of a peace process that aims at finding a just and lasting solution to that question on the basis of international legality, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). This launching of the peace process took place through the initiative by the United States of America and the Soviet Union and the convening of the Madrid Conference for Peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report and we wish to pay tribute to the Chairman, the Rapporteur and all the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their tireless efforts. The reports submitted to the General Assembly provide a picture of the suffering of the Palestinian people, suffering which has lasted for over four decades.

That people, day after day, suffers every form of injustice and repression, the occupation of its territory, the usurpation of its land. Its sons and daughters are displaced and tens of thousands of Palestinians are thrown into jail without charge or trial. Many unarmed civilians are killed and their possessions seized. Trees and crops are torched, houses are dynamited, schools are closed down and holy places are profaned.

These, without exaggeration, are some of the realities of the daily life of the Palestinian people under occupation in its own land. These are facts which the whole world knows, which the United Nations humanitarian organizations attest to and which the international media, including the Israeli press, know to be facts and sometimes report.

None the less, the will of the people cannot be conquered. All these injustices and all this oppression have failed to weaken the determination of the Palestinian people to resist and to defend its human dignity, regain its right to freedom and recover its land. The glorious intifadah is but one shining episode in the heroic saga of Palestinian struggle. With nothing but stones and faith in the justice of its cause, the Palestinian people has confronted the occupying Power and its awesome war machine. The Palestinian people does not fight to occupy the lands of others or to usurp the rights of others. It fights only to recover its own legitimate rights to its own land, the land of its forefathers, its age-old ancestral land. The Palestinian

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

people's struggle is for its human rights. This is a struggle that is recognized under international law. It is a struggle for self-determination and the right to establish the Palestinian people's own independent state on its own homeland.

In spite of all the injustices and all the suffering, the Palestinian people has preferred the use of peaceful means to resolve the conflict. In opting for this approach, it has been supported by all Arab States. The whole world recalls the olive branch held out in this very Hall by Chairman Yasser Arafat. This choice was also reaffirmed in the 1982 peace plan adopted by the summit meeting of Arab States at Fez. In 1988, the Palestinian National Council, which met in Algiers, recognized, and Chairman Yasser Arafat that same year in Geneva declared, that the Palestinian people agreed to resolve the question by peaceful means on the basis of international legality and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). He called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

The Palestinian National Council, at its last meeting, also welcomed the United States-Soviet initiative which led to the convening of the Madrid Conference. As the whole world has seen, the Palestinian delegation to that Conference demonstrated its determination to use peaceful means. From the very beginning of the conference, the statement by the representative of Palestine reaffirmed that peaceful choice by the Palestinian people.

My country, peace- and justice-loving Tunisia, has always participated within its means in the search for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. It hosted the dialogue between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the United States and did all it could to ensure its success. On 14 January 1991, it requested the Security Council to convene

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

a peace conference on the Middle East in the course of this year under United Nations auspices. It also welcomed the United States-Soviet efforts aimed at holding a peace conference on the Middle East and we also welcomed and supported the responsible and constructive response of the Palestinian National Council to those efforts.

In the context of its solidarity with the Palestinian people and in consonance with its cooperation with all international Parties in the search for peace in the Middle East, Tunisia participated in the Madrid Conference in the capacity of observer and was represented by the Secretary-General of the Union of the Arab Magreb.

We hope that in this forum and in the negotiations that were launched in Madrid, Israel will forsake the language of intransigence and accept in real earnest, as the Arab Parties have, to abide by international legality and, above all, by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace which has been reaffirmed by President George Bush in Congress, on 6 March 1991 as a basis for the settlement of the Middle East conflict whose core is the question of Palestine. We hope that, as the Palestinian delegation has done at the Madrid Conference, Israel will respond and show a desire for peace. Intransigence, arrogance and shaky and contradictory arguments do not serve the cause of peace. It is not logical that Israel should ask the Palestinians and all the Arabs to give up their past and to consider the return to the pre-1967 or 1947 borders an illusion while at the same time it gives itself the right to turn the clock of history back 4,000 years. It is not logical to deny the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on their own land under the pretext that other Arabs have enjoyed their right to self-determination on their own territories. Lasting and comprehensive peace and security cannot be based on

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

the usurpation of the land of others by force, repression and aggression. They must be based on justice, respect for international law and international legality, and that includes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, a right that is enjoyed by all other peoples of the world, and the right to the establishment of its own independent State on its own native soil. This can only be achieved in the context of a clear overall plan, that would be binding to all the Parties in all its stages and all its aspects.

There is no doubt that in order for the peace process that was launched in Madrid to succeed, a climate of confidence, of determination and of good will should prevail. Arbitrariness and one-upmanship should be renounced. Israel, in this context, must desist from its settlement policy in Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, as the building of settlements will undermine the very basis of negotiation on the ultimate future of the occupied territories and about the possibility of coexistence between the peoples and states of the region.

It is clear that the latest decision of the Knesset on the annexation of the occupied Golan and the situation in Lebanon indicates that not enough weight has been given to the peace process, which we must all support if the region is to enjoy peace and security.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

Notwithstanding the repressive and provocative practices of the Israeli Government, we have noted with interest the recognition by the opposition Labour Party of Palestinian national rights. This indicates a growing desire for peace and coexistence that seems to be gaining ground in Israeli public opinion as is the case with the Palestinians and other Arab peoples.

The road to the new international order we all aspire after must start from the Middle East region. This is an historic challenge to which the international community rise if we really want a world in which peace and security prevail, in which the rights of all peoples and nations are equal, and in which international relations can develop on the basis of cooperation, understanding and solidarity.

Mr. SALAH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly will today conclude its consideration of the item entitled "Question of Palestine", for this session, by reaffirming once again the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination on its national soil, as well as the urgent need to reach a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli dispute - a settlement built on international legality whose mainstay is the Charter of the United Nations.

I see no need to review the history of the question of Palestine as it is well-known to all those who seek truth and knowledge. Suffice it for me to focus on some aspects which we consider fundamental, particularly in the current stage in the life of our region and against the background of radical world changes and the events which have affected and continue to affect the pattern of world-wide thinking, above all with regard to the search for peaceful solutions to regional disputes.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

May I, first of all, stress that we see no contradiction in continuing consideration of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli dispute in the United Nations, as well as their subsidiary items and issues in different committees, on the one hand, and the activities of the peace conference which recently began in Madrid, as well as the subsequent direct bilateral negotiations and multilateral negotiations on the way to a just, peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement in the Middle East, on the other.

On the contrary, we believe that the Madrid conference, the unremitting efforts that led to it and which are appreciated by all who love peace and justice and believe in the rule of law - and the hopes raised by that conference have all highlighted the efficacy of United Nations resolutions and the role of the Organization. The Madrid conference has been convened on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the application of the principle of land for peace, the achievement by the Palestinian people of its legitimate political rights and guaranteeing peace and security for all States of the region with the objective of reaching a lasting, just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement.

The Madrid conference did not spring from a vacuum. It is the beginning of a new initiative and a new process in the earnest endeavour to find a just, practical and viable solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, built on law and the even-handed application of international legality. It has been convened in the wake of a radical change in the world political environment and in relations between States. It has taken place after the restructuring and reorganization of some of those States and the reaffirmation of fundamental rights, democracy and human rights.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

The Madrid conference, having been convened on the heels of the crisis and war in the Gulf, is a test of the ability of the international community to reaffirm international legality and uphold the rule of law. Above all, the Madrid conference comes after far-reaching developments of which all are aware - developments in the positions of the parties concerned in the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. All these changes and developments - or at least most of them - must have a positive effect on the peace process.

Allow me briefly to remind the Assembly of the important developments in the positions of the Arab and Palestinian side. Jordan and Egypt accepted Security Council resolution 242 (1967) upon its adoption. At the time there were assurances of the implementation of its provisions. Then Syria accepted that resolution, and so did Lebanon. These are the Arab countries that are directly concerned with the Arab-Israeli dispute. These States also accepted Security Council resolution 338 (1973) upon its adoption.

The Arab position was completed with the acceptance by the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1988 of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That acceptance was reflected in resolutions of the General Assembly which reaffirmed the acceptance of those two Security Council resolutions, as well as the general principles stemming therefrom. The following are among those principles: Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds in application of the principle of the inadmissibility of acquisition of the territory of others by force; the right of the States in the region to live in peace and security within internationally agreed borders; acceptance by the Palestinians of the existence of two States on the land of Palestine - one being Israel, the other being the State of Palestine.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Those principles also include the resolution of the problem of the Palestinian refugees, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, and particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948; the halting and dismantling of Israeli settlements built on Arab-occupied territories, in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the many relevant United Nations resolutions.

Thus, the Arab position, including the Palestinian position, became a practical constructive position based on the rule of law and on international support for the aforementioned principles.

What was Israel's position?

Israel continued to occupy Arab and Palestinian land. It persisted in its policies and practices which contravene international law, and particularly the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, the very Convention which the Security Council and the General Assembly decided was, in effect, legally applicable to those territories and their inhabitants.

Israel continued to build and to expand its settlements in the occupied Arab territories. These are illegal acts that are considered null and void.

Immigration increased radically, especially the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, large numbers of whom settled in the Arab occupied territories.

Israel's violations of human rights increased very noticeably and intensively. Violations of the fundamental rights of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in all aspects of their daily lives, freedom of movement, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, freedom of education and access to culture, freedom to work, the right to a livelihood, and even access to religious sites are being violated. A review in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

of the Palestinian People and Other Areas of the Occupied Territories, and other reports, will prove this fact.

Israel continued unilaterally to adopt policies and measures that change the status and demographic composition of the Holy City of Al-Quds. These policies and practices are illegal and null and void.

Furthermore, the Israeli leadership persists in its intransigent and extremist position vis-à-vis the peace process. It still tries to impose conditions by force on the other parties - indeed, on the entire world. This has led His Majesty, King Hussein, to say in his statement before the National Jordanian Congress in Amman on 12 October 1991, before travelling to the Madrid Conference:

> "Some may wonder why we should go to the peace conference, going to the peace conference, while the Israeli leadership continually declares that it will not give up one single inch of occupied territories? The answer to this is: one cause is not something that is between us and Israel alone, it is a matter that is between the whole world and Israel also. It is a question of the rule of international law in support of world peace and rebelling against it. The whole world does not approve the statements of the Israeli leadership, as they run counter to international legality - indeed, an increasing number of the Israelis themselves is moving closer to the world position."

We have heard in the news that the Israeli opposition Labour Party decided last Thursday to recognize the national rights of the Palestinians, to freeze Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and to abandon the policy of prohibiting contacts or talks with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). These are encouraging indications. They are steps in the right direction. We hope that there will be more movement

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

towards the positions of international legality so that there may be movement away from the positions of extremism and intransigence which have been the hallmark of the current Israeli leadership, as was expressed on Friday last in a most blatant fashion by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

It is time the Israeli leadership faced reality. Israel has always claimed that its positions would be of the utmost moderation, if only the Arabs accepted to negotiate directly. Now that the Arab parties have accepted to negotiate, has the Israeli position changed, or has it become more intransigent?

We maintain, and the world maintains with us, that there must be a comprehensive and lasting peace, that new relations and links should be forged on the basis of that peace, that in order to achieve such a peace and to forge such new relations, there must be a full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, including Al-Quds; that there must be an end to Israeli settlements, and above all, there must be recognition of the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, just like all the other peoples of the region - including the Israeli people - to live in security and peace within recognized borders.

We insist, together with the rest of the world, in consonance with the principle of the rule of law and rules of international legality, that security and stability are achieved as a result of the prevalence of peace and not through holding on to the land of others, land which has been occupied by force or through the application of expansionist militaristic theories.

We would add that security measures accepted by all the parties, such as weapon-free zones and other arrangements, will be much more effective than

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

insistence on imposing Israeli conditions, which are unacceptable to the other parties.

The Palestinian people has suffered the horrors and expulsion at the hands of Israel in 1948. It has suffered Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Al-Quds since 1967. The Palestinian people is today one of the last peoples of the world not to have regained its freedom, independence and national homeland. That people has continued to struggle with steadfastness and determination to achieve its rights, just like all other peoples of the world.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

The intifadah was but an expression of that steadfastness. The same applies to the Palestinian people's position vis-à-vis the peace process and the Madrid conference. The Palestinian people, together with the international community, do not ask for much. The Palestinian people wants nothing more than the application of international legality and the principles of international law. It wants to live in peace on its national homeland within recognized borders, just like all other peoples of the world.

Before concluding this statement, I wish to express our appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as well as to its Chairman and membership. I cannot fail also to place on record our appreciation for the efforts of the Division for Palestinian Rights in the Secretariat, as well as that of the Department of Public Information, in disseminating facts and data concerning the question of Palestine and the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, as I stated at the beginning, the position and resolutions that we adopt within the United Nations and the efforts which our international Organization must deploy do not contradict the peace process which began in Madrid, but indeed, they must support and complement that peace process.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh): At a historic conjunction of real détente, reconciliation, understanding and compassion, and we see a flicker of hope for mankind to live finally in harmony and peace on mother Earth, there is one loud and discordant note in the symphony. In our religion - Islam - human beings are considered the best creation of Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate. All religions have their Gods and those revered Gods do

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

not think differently for the well-being of their believers. Can we pray in our respective religions to our Gods and give a solemn pledge that we all live in peace, that we are making this globe something that you, the Almighty and All Compassionate, should be proud of, and that this environment of beauty, grandeur and bountiful resources is in the caring and compassionate hands of believers of all Gods and all faiths? This discordant note to which I have referred is the question of Palestine. It is no longer a question; it is now an answer to Palestine.

The conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is Palestine problem, has so far eluded solution and remained intractable. The question of Palestine, or, rather, as I say, the answer to Palestine, is one of the greatest tragedies of our time. However, a historic transformation has taken place in the political complexion of the globe. Positive events have transformed the contemporary world in a manner which fills us with optimism. This historic opportunity must be seized to find a lasting and durable solution to the Palestine issue.

The situation in the Middle East remains a source of profound and intense concern not only because of the political principles and issues at stake but also because of the widespread human suffering caused by the failure to resolve those issues. Over four decades have elapsed since the question was first debated in the United Nations. The international community, despite its serious endeavour, has failed to find a solution to the question of Palestine. The situation in the Middle East, particularly in occupied Palestine and Arab territories, has deteriorated in recent years. Further delay in resolving the issues might bring further turmoil to the entire region - something the whole world wants to avoid in the new matrix of hope.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

In the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, the United States undertook serious endeavours to launch a peace process in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the land-for-peace principle. The culmination of these efforts led to the convening of the Madrid conference on the Middle East. Bangladesh welcomes the Madrid conference which, we hope, will trigger wider consultations to reinforce the initiative leading to a just and durable solution to the Palestine and Middle East problems.

The peace negotiations will be difficult because the issues are undoubtedly complex. The success of the conference will require necessary political will and pragmatism by all parties, particularly Israel, which occupies Palestine and Arab territories.

Bangladesh believes that there is a continuing and relevant role for the United Nations in the search for a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Whether or not one admits it, it is obvious that no just and lasting peace in the region can be achieved without the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to their homeland. A comprehensive, just and durable solution to the conflict in the Middle East and to the question of Palestine cannot be achieved unless Israel withdraws from the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from other occupied Arab territories on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

We regret that Israel is pursuing a policy of establishing new settlements for Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories with the aim of perpetuating occupation by altering the demographic composition in the

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occupied areas. Bangladesh notes with deep concern that Israel is continuing to establish settlements in occupied Palestine, including Jerusalem and Arab territories, despite Security Council resolutions and in contravention of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Such policies, we believe, constitute definite impediments to the success of the peace conference.

The intifadah, the Palestinian uprising to end Israeli occupation, is continuing for a fourth year against overwhelming odds. Bangladesh reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people. We salute their indomitable courage and resilience. Our support for the Palestinian cause is unwavering. The intifadah has testified to the rejection of the occupied status quo. Dehumanization, detention, banishment or deaths, as has been decisively proved by recent developments in certain strategic parts of the world, cannot deter resistance, including, of course, Palestinian resistance. Their cause is based on justice, and if such a cause succeeded elsewhere, it should logically do so in the case of Palestine.

Israel continues to take even more repressive measures to quash the intifadah. Meanwhile the situation in the occupied territories grows steadily worse, with heavy loss of human life as well as hundreds and thousands wounded or detained since the start of the movement. The Security Council has repeatedly called on Israel to abide by its obligations as a State Party to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The human rights situation of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories has deteriorated to such an extent that this population is now reaching the stage of mere survival. In view of the gravity of such developments, Bangladesh calls upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to adopt measures to ensure protection of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

The acquisition of territory by force is impermissible under international law. No country may be allowed to enjoy the fruits of aggression. Israel must withdraw from all the territories occupied since June 1967, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions. There can be no just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine - the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict - that does not take into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Palestine.

The intifadah should serve as a signal to Israel that no people will for ever tolerate oppression in silence. We hope that the Madrid conference, which set in motion a process of negotiation, will result in a durable peace in the region and, finally, in the establishment of a homeland for the Palestinian people and, thus, will make a significant contribution to international peace, security and harmony.

Mr. TRINH XUAN LANG (Viet Nam): The new climate in international relations has brought about peaceful solutions to a number of conflicts in different parts of the world. For the past 44 years, however, the question of Palestine has remained unsolved. It is our hope that the new international situation will provide a favourable climate for the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

The United Nations and the international community should urgently concentrate their efforts to secure a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine. The enormous suffering of the Palestinian people during the past four and a half decades must be ended. No

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just and lasting peace will be achieved in the Middle East until the Palestinian people are able to exercise fully their legitimate national rights - primarily the right to self-determination and to a homeland. No just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine will be achieved until Israel withdraws from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, that it has occupied since 1967, and from the other occupied Arab territories, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the other relevant resolutions.

For the past 44 years Israel has persisted in its policy of intransigence, thus obstructing the attainment of a peaceful, comprehensive and durable solution to the conflict. It has used all means to maintain its occupation of Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories and to prevent the Palestinian people from exercising their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to a homeland. It has rejected the Palestinians' peace initiative of December 1988 and the United Nations resolutions aimed at advancing the peace process. It has ignored all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and has intensified the settlement of Jews in the occupied territories.

As a result of Israel's imposition of harsh repressive measures the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has deteriorated noticeably, particularly in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The intensification of land confiscation and of the settlement policy and practice pursued by Israel in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, that it has occupied since 1967, as well as other harsh measures against Palestinians - such measures as

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deportation, widespread arrests, detention, raids on homes and villages, and prolonged curfews - have caused untold suffering for the Palestinian people.*

We believe that the General Assembly and the Security Council must urgently and firmly address the questions of Jewish settlement and the protection and safety of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The Assembly and the Council must do everything possible to monitor the situation of Palestinians under Israeli occupation and to promote the adoption, by the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, of concrete measures aimed at ensuring that Israel, the occupying Power, will in all circumstances respect the Convention in conformity with its obligation under article 1 of the Convention. In this connection, we highly commend the efforts made by the Secretary-General, by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in response to the appeal of the Palestinian people.

The staunch and persistent struggle waged by the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to return to their territory and to establish an independent and sovereign State, has resulted in important developments. The Palestinian intifadah - the uprising of the Palestinian people, now in its fourth year - is an expression of the determination of those people to liberate their territory and to achieve their inalienable national rights.

The Government and the people of Viet Nam have unswervingly supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people. We greatly appreciate the

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* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Trinh Xuan Lang, Viet Nam)

constructive attitude demonstrated by the Palestinian leaders in agreeing to participate in the Madrid peace conference. As a peace-loving people, we have always supported fully the efforts to achieve, at an early date, a comprehensive political solution to all the problems in the Middle East - first of all, the problem of Palestine - through peaceful negotiations. In this spirit, we believe that the recent meeting in Madrid is a positive step, although many difficulties and complexities lie ahead. We are firmly of the view that a comprehensive and durable solution to the Middle East conflict must be based on the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, that they have occupied since 1967, and from the other occupied Arab territories; cessation of the construction of Jewish settlements in those occupied territories; and recognition of the basic national rights of the Palestinian people. We are confident that, ultimately, the arduous and staunch struggle waged by the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization and with the support of the United Nations and of peace- and justice-loving peoples throughout the world, will be crowned with victory.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): International détente prevails in the world today. The establishment of a new international order is contributing to the resolution of most international problems. The question of Palestine - the core of the Arab-Israel dispute - is one of the international problems that must be solved in a just manner in order for durable peace to prevail not only in our region, the Middle East, but also in the entire world.

The question of Palestine is a cause of right and justice in the first place. Today, we face new realities in the international arena which, we hope, will shape the future of the Palestinian cause. The international peace conference was convened in Madrid some weeks ago. The Palestinian delegation went to that conference carrying olive branches, declaring to the world that the Palestinians are a people that advocate and aspire to peace. Will the world now help them to achieve their national inalienable rights?

Since its establishment under General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX), dated 10 November 1974, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has made many fruitful efforts to focus the attention of the world on the Palestinian cause and to urge the international community to step up its efforts towards finding a just solution to that question.

On this occasion, I wish to express our thanks and appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Absa Diallo, as well as to the members of the Committee for the Committee's report to the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly (A/46/35). The report states the Committee's belief that

"with the recent manifestation of a renewed international determination to ensure equity, justice and consistency in the application of the

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principles of international law, it is of the utmost importance to intensify efforts to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict." (A/46/35, para. 4)

In addition, the Committee reaffirmed that

"Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories and its denial of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including those to self-determination without external interference, to national independence and sovereignty, and to return to its homes and property, constitute tne principal obstacle to the achievement of a just peace." (Ibid., para. 7)

Moreover, the Committee strongly deplored Israel's continued reliance on military force to suppress the Palestinian uprising, the intifadah, and the increasing restrictions on freedom of movement and economic activity of Palestinians, which greatly jeopardized their livelihood.

Furthermore, the Committee supported the efforts of the Secretary-General regarding the convening of a meeting of the High Contracting Parties in accordance with Security Council resolution 681 (1990).

The entire world is aware of the flexibility demonstrated by the Palestinian people, reflected in the resolution of 24 September 1991 of its National Council to accept participation in the peace process that began in Madrid, which is certainly not helped by the intransigence of the Israeli Government and the successive obstacles it places on the road to a just and comprehensive solution to this tragic question.

The time has come for Israel to be put on the spot, for its claims to be unmasked, just as it pretends to be reaching out for peace before the

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international community. If Israel truly desires peace, it must put an end to its devious measures aimed at imposing the policy of fait accompli and consecrating its policy of settler expansionism. The time has come for the international community to see the truth behind Israel's claimed desire for peace and its position vis-à-vis United Nations resolutions, which are the legitimate basis for the solution to this problem. The time has come to get away from semantic acrobatics and to show commitment to these resolutions.

Moreover, Israel must realize that it cannot achieve peace while it persists in its policy of settler expansionism, which is in direct contradiction to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the basis of any possible settlement.

Last year's events have demonstrated the international community's determination to support the role of the United Nations in achieving peace in different parts of the world and in applying the rules of international legality in upholding justice and guaranteeing rights.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, like all its Arab brethren, has close links with the question of Palestine and the just struggle of the Palestinian people. In the wake of the 1948 tragedy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia participated and continues to participate with all its capabilities alongside the sons of the Palestinian people in supporting Palestinian rights and the just steadfastness of the Palestinian people inside and outside the occupied territories on all economic, social and political levels.

I must reiterate the strong commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the need to uphold what is right and just in Palestine, under the guidance of the Guardian of the Two Holy Sites, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, who has played a

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principal role in supporting Palestinian rights since the beginning of the practices aimed at undermining those rights. We must not forget that it was his peace initiative, which was adopted by the Arab Summit Conference in Fez, in November 1981. Now, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, together with its Arab brethren, stands in support of international efforts aimed at finding a just solution and a comprehensive peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israel conflict and guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We hope that these efforts will enjoy the continuing support of the international community so that a durable peace, based on justice, in the land of Palestine may be achieved.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to inform members that the draft resolutions to be submitted under this item will be considered at a later date to be announced in the Journal.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.